



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007

CHRISTINE C. QUINN
SPEAKER

TELEPHONE
212-788-7210

July 17, 2012

Demos P. Demopoulos
Secretary-Treasurer/Executive Officer
Teamsters Local Union No. 553
265 West 14th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10011-7187

Dear Mr. Demopolous:

A video of one of your carriage horse drivers verbally assaulting a group of women during NYC's LGBT Pride week was recently brought to my attention.

The behavior depicted in this video is reprehensible and unacceptable from anyone, and is especially unbefitting of an industry the City Council has made sure treats its animals humanely.

Not only should the union take every step necessary to investigate and respond to this incident, but it also should implement anti-discrimination training immediately to help make sure its members are being respectful of all residents and visitors to our city.

What happened to these women is truly outrageous and wrong and should not be tolerated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine C. Quinn".

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Dear Ms. Navratilova:

Thank you very much for your letter speaking out against the disturbing incident that occurred over NYC's Pride weekend during which a group of women were verbally assaulted with homophobic and racist slurs by a carriage horse driver.

This type of behavior is reprehensible and unacceptable from anyone, and is especially unbecoming of an industry that the NYC Council has worked very hard to help make sure treats its animals humanely.

At my request, the union for the carriage horse drivers has agreed to require drivers to immediately take an anti-discrimination training course. My office will be working with them and the appropriate NYC LGBT organization to help implement this training. We must make sure that this doesn't ever happen again. In NYC, we celebrate diversity, we don't denigrate diversity. The behavior by this driver is unacceptable.

As for your support for Intro. 86, I greatly appreciate you letting me know where you stand on this issue.

As you note in your letter, life on NYC's streets can be extremely difficult for carriage horses. That's something that the City Council and I take very seriously. In fact, in 2010 we passed new carriage horse regulations requiring, among other things, that horses have larger stalls, five weeks of vacation and rest per year, and blankets in cold and wet weather. Our legislation also included several important safety requirements. For example, carriages must have emergency brakes and reflective material. They also must be equipped with manure-catching devices. And new horse carriage drivers must now have a driver's license and go through additional training.

Given the tough economic times that we are in, we continue to believe that our current regulatory scheme, which does not permit the operation of electronic cars, strikes a fair balance between having stronger regulations in place to protect these horses while allowing an industry that generates vital jobs and tourism for our city to continue.

However, we've been closely monitoring recent incidents involving carriage horses, including the one last month that you reference in your letter.

We've also been working closely with advocates to address any new health and/or safety issues as they arise and recently introduced legislation (Intro. 714) to help ensure that these horses are being examined by experienced, knowledgeable and independent veterinarians. We hope to have a hearing on this bill sometime soon.

Thanks again for being such a strong voice for animals and people everywhere. I'll certainly keep your strong support for Intro. 86 in mind as we continue to look for ways to help further protect and improve the lives of these special animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Christine C. Quinn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Christine C. Quinn
Speaker